

Working in the Time of COVID-19 Oral History Project
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Paul Mitsuo Kurose
Instructor, North Seattle College
Member, AFT Local 1789

Narrator: Paul Kurose

Interviewers: Ella Munizza

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ELLA MUNIZZA 00:00:12

--on this computer. Okay, so once again, thank you so much for participating in the project. I'm just going to ask you filled out a consent form-- do I have consent still to record this oral history?

PAUL KUROSE 00:00:26

Yes.

ELLA 00:00:27

Okay. So, my name is Ella Munizza and now I'm gonna do the--, the kind of slate on for the recording. So today is May 5th, yes, may 5 of 2021. The time is 11:09pm. I am in Seattle, Washington. My name is Ella Munizza. This project is Working in the Time of COVID-19. I am interviewing Paul Kurose and he is also in Seattle, Washington. Correct?

PAUL 00:01:01

Yes.

ELLA 00:01:02

Great.

PAUL 00:01:02

Except for the time.

ELLA 00:01:04

(*chuckles*) Okay, so then we will start with just your demographic information. What is your name? And can you please spell it out for me?

PAUL 00:01:14

Paul -- PAUL Mitsuo Kurose. It's P a u l, M i t s u o, K u r o s e

ELLA 00:01:27

Great, and then how old are you?

PAUL 00:01:30

I'm 64.

ELLA 00:01:34

And what is your date of birth?

PAUL 00:01:36

September 26 1956.

ELLA 00:01:40

And where were you born?

PAUL 00:01:42

Seattle, Washington.

ELLA 00:01:49

What gender, if any, do you identify with?

PAUL 00:01:52

Male.

ELLA 00:01:53

And what pronouns do you use?

PAUL 00:01:56

He, him, his.

ELLA 00:01:59

And then what race or ethnicity do you identify as?

PAUL 00:02:03

Japanese American.

ELLA 00:02:05

Okay. And then how important is your racial or ethnic background to you?

PAUL 00:02:14

It's very important.

ELLA 00:02:17

Do you want to tell me a little bit more about that?

PAUL 00:02:20

Um, (*pauses*), I think just, family history (*pauses*), life experiences are very tied into who I am in my racial identity. Growing up being very aware of that, and being made aware of what did my parents and grandparents had experienced related to race. Being very aware of what our community had, and still was encountering and still is encountering, (*pauses*), in addition to just that racial identity in terms of Japanese American just as a person of color growing up in America, living in America, is something that's very significant. And I'm very aware that.

ELLA 00:03:41

I just have one followup question that you can touch on or not, but you said you were aware of this growing up or made aware, how were you, I guess, how were you made aware of was it was it by the community? Was it by life experiences? Was it by explicit teaching from family members?

PAUL 00:04:01

I think all of the above. So certainly, I think, teaching and being enlightened by family members was a huge part of that, because I think a lot of people grow up in similar circumstances, and they're not as aware. Or, or, maybe they kind of block it out, I think. I mean, I think there's (*chuckles*), I think you can't not be aware because, - the you know, things happen, things you experience. I guess you could interpret things differently. But I think it was very apparent to me that so much had to do with race. And again, part of it being apparent to me was because of my parents and elder siblings and my younger sister as well. I mean, we all were very conscious about it. And, yeah, and it was very clear from things we saw, things we had seen that race did play a major factor in all of it.

ELLA 00:05:26

Okay, thank you so much for elaborating on that. And then kind of building off that, can you talk about any social, political, ethnic, racial, or religious communities that you are regularly-- regularly connected with right now? If any?

PAUL 00:05:45

Yeah, I mean, I'm connected with the community I grew up in, in Seattle Central District. So I think that there's a community of people who grew up in this district that - we might not consistently connect with each other formally, but there's connections that we have as a community that I think - many of us identify strongly with and identify strongly with each other. The Japanese American community as well, you know, I grew up here in Seattle, and have been part of that community as well. I think, again, not, like membership in organizations so much as just being connected, - and involved in different things. I do have some connections with some organizations now, with Japanese American Citizens League. They award a scholarship every year in my mom's name in honor of my mom. So I'm involved with that, significantly. I take part in that scholarship committee every year. And with the Japanese American Citizens League, we do some activities at a middle school in Seattle named after my mom. So there's connections I have there with that organization. -

PAUL 00:07:46

In my workplace, I mean, I work at the Seattle-- at North Seattle College, which is in the Seattle College District, used to be called Community College District. We have an Asian affinity group, Asian Pacific Islander affinity group that I was, I'm a part of. It's not real active, but we started it up a few years back. And I'm also currently a much more active group is we have a BIPOC[Black, Indigenous, or People of Color] caucus within our teacher's union in the Seattle College District, the American Federation of Teachers, local 1789. And what else? And then this pandemic has changed some things up quite a bit, but you know, just a lot of community involvement, both in the Asian American and communities of color and Seattle.

ELLA 00:09:01

Wow.

PAUL 00:09:02

Maybe that's everything.

ELLA 00:09:04

Okay. Wow, wonderful. You shared so much. I have a couple followup questions for you to elaborate on a few want. Starting with one of the first groups you talked about just being involved in you said, you grew up in Seattle Central District, and you don't always explicitly connect with those people. But there are things you share because of your experiences. What are some of those things tied to the Central District that you feel connect you?

PAUL 00:09:32

I think, well don't just think, I know, there's a lot of solidarity between and among those of us who grew up in the Central District and identified strongly with each other. We encountered a lot of the same experiences. We're living in the same circumstances. So you know that was Central to that. And I think through that we also developed a real, I think consciousness about race in America, and (*pauses*) kind of a commitment to addressing a lot of the issues that we as people of color encounter in America. And, you know, and throughout the world, I mean, I think there's identification that (*pauses*) through that experience, we developed with each other. And, yeah, so that's, I kind of feel like, you know, we, I see people still connect with people who some of them are my elders, from the community, some of them were you know, just lots of different connections. As a teacher, sometimes I would have students who were family members of people I grew up with, and so there were connections there that were meaningful and deep, and we were connected. So, I think a lot of us feel that connection, kind of that's who we are (*chuckles*) you know. So very connected that way. And it was, -It was a diverse community as well. I mean, it was predominantly people of color. That's where we were all historically, in Seattle, restricted to live was with each other. And (*pauses*) some positive things come out of that, you know, in appreciating each other. Sometimes some negative things come out as well, you know, we sometimes see that some of that conflict between in among different groups that should be in solidarity with one another, if they understood the situation better. That sounds kind of cocky about it. But I think that's a lot of times that's the case is that we're pitted against each other. And sometimes we're not seeing that (*pauses*) You know, amongst each other, we're not the enemies. We're not enemies. We're fighting against the same kinds of injustices.

ELLA 00:12:51

Yeah, thank you for sharing so much more about that. And kind of your history growing up there and how that's influenced you today with your connections, understandings. I have one more question about you listed so many things you're involved in. I have one more question for this section.) You said you're involved in the Japanese American Citizens League, and it's actually there [*?had?*] I believe you said there's a scholarship in your mom's name and a middle school. Can you tell me your mother's name and spell it out?

PAUL 00:13:24

Her name is Aki, A k i, Kurose, K u r o s e. Her full first name is actually Akiko, A k i k o, but she always went by Aki, we just come in with Japanese names. And what else did you say? That's her name spelled it out?

ELLA 00:13:50

That was my first part of my question. And then my second part was I wanted to ask you, what can you tell me a little bit more about your involvement in this organization and how there came to be a scholarship and a Middle School associated with your your mother.

PAUL 00:14:09

My mom and older siblings, but mainly my sister Ruth and older sister Ruth Ann, were involved with JACL [Japanese American Citizens League] from way back. I never was really active in it. I was involved in different ways with different things that they did you know and supported different things that they got involved with at times. And you know, one thing, you know, there was a lot of education and activism around Japanese American incarceration World WAR II incarceration that initially the JACL wasn't really very strongly (*pauses*) progressive about I think, but, it evolved into being very active in the redress movement to have (*pauses*) it acknowledged, formally acknowledged, by the US government, the wrong that was done the injustice that was committed against our people.

PAUL 00:15:23

So my mom and older sister, as far as our family goes, were the ones who were primarily -- my dad as well, not quite as much because he was one of those who really committed himself to our family. He worked seven days a week, so usually seven nights a week, graveyard shift, so he wasn't as- as active, but he was definitely very, took strong positions on such matters. And, my mom got recognized by -- well, the two things I mentioned were after she passed away, but she got a lot of recognition. I'm, we're very grateful that she got a letter of recognition as well when she was still living for a lot of the work that she did. She was an activist. She was a Quaker, so she was really involved in peace activism. But she also got involved in other social justice causes. We grew up here in the central district. This house I'm living in is our family home. The realtors won't sell it to my parents when my parents bought it in 1961, because it's on the other side of the 34th Avenue red line that exists up in my drawing neighborhood. Because 34th Avenue is the ridge and we're on the side of the ridge that goes down toward the lake and that was racially restricted. But the owner of the home so house to our parents around the realtor Lake Washington Realty, not being willing to sell it to us. To my parents, that was only five, so not to me. But my mom got active. I don't know if she got active in a lot of the Fair Housing stuff before that, but I -I do know, that I learned for being active in a lot of the fair housing, protests and such. Back in the 60s, so she she was very, she was very involved. And then she -she went back to school when me and my younger sister were old enough. We had six kids in the family. So once we got to be of age where she could go off to finish her education. She did that. She started working with Project head start when it first began in the city. She worked with Dorothy Hollingsworth in Daisy Dawson, Daisy Tibbs Dawson in getting that program off the ground in this in Seattle. Dorothy Hollingsworth was the one who really led that and then she became a kindergarten first grade teacher. She taught at Martin Luther King elementary school under Louise McKinney, who was the principal there her husband, Reverend Samuel B. McKinney. But then my mom got

PAUL 00:19:02

the equivalent of getting bused like I got bused from the central district to North Seattle as a student. She got transferred from the central district to North Seattle, because they -the school district was doing this thing to try and desegregate faculty as well. And she encountered a lot in having that happen to her but she won a lot of people in the community that she was bused or she was transferred into that bus that she drove she transferred into she really won them over and they really later supported her tremendously and we're appreciative. We weren't very appreciative initially with the response they gave her. But later, our family's really appreciative of the support and recognition that That community gave her once they got past their initial ignorance about who she was. Anyway, so she got a lot of recognition, she got a Presidential Award. And then when she passed away a lot of them, actually not just the Japanese American citizens League, a lot of community members, of all many different backgrounds advocated for her for a school in Seattle being named after one of the Seattle Public Schools, and it was Sharpless Middle School, and our Sharpless junior high, and then they changed it and named it in her honor. So that was pretty special for us. And then, and then the Japanese American citizens league started up a scholarship in her recognition as well. And that's so I've been involved with that actually, where this Saturday we're awarding, we do it every year, but the Saturday is our awards. Used to be a banquet can do a banquet, now but award ceremony where I get to present the Aki Croesus scholarship to a college student. So that's nice.

ELLA 00:21:35

Wow, that's amazing. Thank you for sharing so much about your family history and how it relates to that context of today that's incredible. This question is gonna seem kind of funny, but I'm just going down the list. (*Chuckles*) Where do you live? Now? I'm assuming Seattle. (*Chuckles*)

PAUL 00:21:53

Yeah. So I'm here in Seattle, in central district. And like I said, I'm the one who came back home and then stayed in our family home when our parents had passed away. And so I'm over in the Central District, which isn't the central district of old, certainly, you know, it's changed and changed and continues to change. But there's a few of us who are still here, who. And so this is where I am.

ELLA 00:22:24

Wonderful. And the next set of questions are going to be about your work. And it'll tie back into maybe your work with the BIPOC aspect of your union. So I'm going to ask you questions about your work today. What is your current occupation and profession?

PAUL 00:22:42

I'm an -an instructor at North Seattle College. I teach math. That's my full time. I'm a tenured faculty member. I've been there for approaching 20 years. I also teach part time at Seattle University. Right now, I've been doing that for the last year and a half. So that's been (*pauses*) a privilege honor, something I really appreciate done. I had been teaching part time in the Seattle Public Schools, in addition to my work at North Seattle College, but they had a change in plans on how they wanted to use me. And it wasn't what I had gone back to teaching in the Seattle Public Schools to do. I taught high school for quite a few years. Before joining the Community College ranks, first in Oakland, California, and then back here in Seattle at Franklin High School. And then I was approached by a principal at Franklin High School to come and do some work with the math department there. And after doing some work with the faculty there for a couple of years, I suggested to her having me work with students who needed help. Instead of trying to work with faculty, I felt like I could make more of a difference working with the students who needed most help. And so I was working with incoming freshmen into the high school who were entering underprepared for high school math. I later transferred over to Garfield to do that. And then when the principal decided that he wanted me to teach the AP Calculus kids instead, I happened to get contacted by Seattle University to come teach a class there. And so basically told that principle I didn't go to Garfield to teach those kids I went to Garfield to teach the kids of people in this community that I grew up in. I mean, I had students in that ninth grade class who were children and grandchildren and grand nephews and nieces of people I grew up with. And so I didn't go to Garfield to teach AP calculus. And so I left and that some part time at Seattle U [Seattle University] But then again, my full time position at North Seattle College where I'm, that's why I'm the member of AFT [American Federation of Teachers], local 1789.

ELLA 00:25:40

Wow, that's, that's great detail, and very memorable, like, work to stay with your passion and stay within the community. I think you went over how long you've been in your place of employment. How long have you been a teacher in general?

PAUL 00:26:06

It's been around for a few years. So (*pauses*) I started teaching. Well, I started teaching with different programs. In the early 1980s. I went to Berkeley [University of California, Berkeley] for graduate school and math. And instead of being a TA on campus, I worked for a program where I went into an elementary school in Richmond, California, just north of Berkeley. And I worked with fourth graders. And it was actually my first encounter with a totally segregated school. So in the flatlands of Richmond, California, you know, there's just this total segregation. And so I worked with those fourth graders, and other elementary school kids, instead of being a TA throughout my graduate work at UC Berkeley. I also worked with Upward Bound and Mesa programs when I was a student, grad grad student at Berkeley. And then after graduating from there, I was working in a program in high school out in East Oakland, California. And I had looked into getting a teacher Korean teaching credential as an undergraduate at University of Washington and as a graduate student at Berkeley. But the program's never really were very supportive. And (*stutter*) I just didn't end up doing the programs there to get the credentials. But I was working in this high school on East Oakland, for a program out of the Lawrence Hall of Science, which is kind of like the Pacific Science Center in Seattle, but it's Lawrence Hall of Science on the Berkeley campus. And while I was there at that high school, a month into the school year, a new teacher that had come to that school quit, because she wasn't comfortable working at that particular High School, again, another very segregated High School in the Bay Area at that time. And the principal approached me about taking over for that teacher. I didn't have a credential at the time. And she said she could get me into a program to get me an emergency credential. So I was able to do that. So I taught at Castleman High School, and he still quitting for my first nine years as a full time teacher. And then I worked a few more years in Oakland schools before coming home, back to Seattle. And I was able to be with my mom her last year with us here. And then I started teaching in Seattle.

ELLA 00:29:14

Wow. Okay. Long, long journey. Um, can you tell me you said, getting your teaching certificate from either Berkeley and UW, or UW[University of Washington]? They were not super supportive programs. What did you mean by that? What was lacking?

PAUL 00:29:34

Um, well, the UW. One was I, so I was very privileged to have gone to Lakeside High School in Seattle. The fifth of the six kids in the family. The -my eldest brother and sister they graduated from Garfield. The next two brothers in our family, they started at Garfield, there was a lot going on at Garfield. And they got involved in a lot. And they ended up getting kicked out of Garfield and ended up at Franklin High School where there was a lot of turmoil in their educations there as well. So I got sent to Lakeside, and Lakeside is where Bill Gates and PAUL Allen went to high school, Bill Gates was a year older than me. But I tell people, I ended up with the best teachers money can buy, because that's what Bill Gates and PAUL and his parents were paying for. My -my parents weren't able to pay that money, like they, they were able to get financial aid to send me there. But I came out with, you know, getting well prepared for college level math. And so when I was at U- The University of Washington, I was in the Honors Program there, I was doing quite well. And when I looked into the teacher credential program there, they told me, Well, those aren't the classes that you need to take to become a teacher. We have these other teacher these these other math classes for people going into education. And I just, I was young, and I wasn't, you know, kind of thinking so much about career is probably, you know, it was probably good. It's probably better that I didn't go into teaching right away better than I matured some first. But you know, that been, that wasn't (*pauses*) I felt like, why do I need to drop out of the honors program to take these other classes, math classes that you have for people going into education, right, I mean, these- I'm in, I'm doing quite well on these other classes that I'm taking. So anyway, I went on graduated, took a few years off. And then when I went back to graduate school, when I was at Berkeley, I looked into their teacher credential program. And I remember going to their orientation, and there's probably a couple hundred people in the room. And they asked how many of you are in math. And there were less than 10 of us in that room, probably about five of us in that room that raised our hands. And they said they really wanted to talk to us about it, you know, and I was in the MA program there. I went to talk to them. And they said, Well, you know, our program is really demanding. It's a two year program. And you can't really work while you're in the program. Because, you know, the demands are so heavy on you. Because you have to do the student teaching and everything. And I said, Well, (*chuckles*), I can't not worked for two years, right? And, because of the problem. And so I ended up not applying or, you know, and what they said is, well, we have financial aid to support you. And I said, No, I -you know that. So anyways, it wasn't too attractive for me to go that route. And then this other situation came up. So I was able to with that situation at Castleman High School, when the principal set that up for me, I was actually able to get a contract, and start working as a teacher and take classes at the same time to get my credential. And so I didn't have to go through that student teaching where, you know, basically, you're doing somebody else's job for them. They're getting the pay, and you're actually paying to get credits for doing their work. Yeah, I think a lot there's a lot to be desired about what we do to support people to become teachers. And my son's about to graduate from college, and he just applied to a master's in teaching program and (*chuckles*) I wish I wish they were doing more. But, anyway, so I don't know I get lost in answering the question. I start talking.(*chuckles*)

ELLA 00:34:32

No, that's -that's wonderful. I think that was all really useful and talking about your your career and your trajectory and those are really great points about the support for teachers, kind of turning to your union membership. So can you state for me again, in full what union you are a member of?

PAUL 00:34:49

the American Federation of Teachers, local 1789.

ELLA 00:34:54

Okay. And 1789 correct?

PAUL 00:35:00

Yeah,

ELLA 00:35:01

okay, I have it written down, I think on your information sheet. So you spoke before that you're a member of, I think, like a BI- BIPOC advocacy group at that union. So you've obviously served in some office, have you served in any other offices with the union? And can you tell me a little bit?

PAUL 00:35:20

Actually, I haven't served in any offices.

ELLA 00:35:23

Okay.

PAUL 00:35:24

oh, and then the other thing I'm involved with, I didn't mention with the Asian Pacific American labor Alliance.

ELLA 00:35:30

Oh Okay!

PAUL 00:35:33

That's, I think you mentioned Tracy had given you my name, she's very active in that organization. So this BIPOC caucus is just from the membership of the Union. And it actually just formed this past year. Just to address the inequities, the lack of representation, the lack of inclusion in decision making within the union, and lack of representation in the union leadership. And we've been raising some of those issues, and hopefully, we will be able to get not just the leadership, but the rank and file within the union too, not just hope that someday, people of color are equitably represented in that union. But you know, now, and so that's, you know, I actually was in a meeting yesterday, with people talking about putting a slate together to run for office this year. So, I said I more interested in supporting others doing that I did kind of feel *(pauses)*

PAUL 00:37:15

pitiful, *(chuckles)* I think- not stepping up and asking other people to step up. But yeah, that's just kind of where I'm at right now with it. But I - I really do, you know, been active in with that group, and working in plan to work hard with them to address that real problem we have within the union. I think it's something that, you know, people are well aware, but maybe don't often enough address is how, within unions, which get, always, you know, people think of unions as being very progressive, but even within and, and they are, they are important for workers rights and worker solidarity. But within that, there's frequently and has historically been a whole lot of racism. And so, that's what our BIPOC caucus is trying to address within our teachers union.

ELLA 00:38:27

Great, thank you for talking about that. And its role in your, your involvement with the union. Now going to kind of your, you're still on your work, can you walk me through a typical day working you can, it can either be at, you know, Seattle U, or North Seattle Community College, like a typical day at work before the pandemic, from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed. So what that looks like for you before the pandemic.

PAUL 00:39:01

Um, Okay, so I mean, the schedule has always changed, right? And with this extra work that I've done outside of the Seattle Colleges, it's always been a real juggling act for me to figure out how to be in two places at the same time or you know, just move from one to the other. So, *(pauses)* I-, I had situations where I was teaching a morning class at Seattle U and then later on, I was teaching a late afternoon class, but let me just go with the quarter I had the morning class, where that quarter was really convenient because Seattle U is just a couple miles from here, and I have the same zip code as Seattle University. So I'd go there and teach. And that was a three day a week class. And then after teaching there, I was about to North Seattle College. And the last couple years, I've taught a class and also coordinated the math tutoring at North Seattle College as part of my teaching workload. And so I'd either go out there and go to the math tutoring center, or maybe go to my office and do work from my office or go to the class that I was teaching. And so, it was a lot kind of

juggling it. And you know, the daily routine was different spending time in the math Learning Center, coordinating the tutors, I typically didn't have a consistent schedule. I would have some hours that I would do consistently. But then I also had flexible hours because I was coordinating the tutoring for the whole day. And so if I just set certain hours, then I wouldn't ever see some of the tutors who were there late in the day or evening or on weekends. And so, I spent some time there, spend some time in my office doing a lot of prep work. And then, if I was teaching a class on campus, in addition to that, you know, working that in as well. Before the pandemic, I was also teaching this kids martial arts class at Ranger Community Center, two nights a week. So, my brother had started that up. And my two of my older brothers guy in Raleigh were -had gone back to Japan and trained and really were incredible martial artists, but they, when they came back to Seattle, they didn't start a big commercial school. They taught in the community centers and churches and other places where they were given space so they can teach the class and people who just take the class from them. And then when my brother passed away, my brother guy passed away my brother Raul, he passed away much earlier on when my brother guy passed away, he was teaching his class at Rainier beach community center. And myself and one of the other black belts took over to continue the class. And so I was doing that a couple nights a week. So after coming back home, a couple of nights a week, I'd go to the community center, teach that class. And then I always tell my students, I kind of got started on this awful approach to doing my work. When I was in graduate school, I would usually study from like 10 or 11, at night until three in the morning. And so I still kind of do that. So I do- you know, my son's in college now, but when you know, we're raising him, I'd have time with him and be able to be with him and do things and then after everybody else goes to sleep, then nothing else to do. So that's when I do my work. Plus, it's so I maybe I kind of got on that physically and mentally, you know, my brain activity, all that kind of stuff gets caught up in that little schedules. So that's a lot of times when I'll do my work. I don't know if any of my replies to your emails happened to come in those hours, but sometimes, yeah, so then a lot of times, that's when I do some additional hours planning, grading, whatever. It's like from 11 to two, three. And then back at it the next day. Oh, and then sometimes in there. Around five in the afternoon, every once in a while. It made more and every once in a while. I'd catch up on some of those hours that I lost the night before (*chuckles*). little quick nap to you. I just get ready to keep going. So that's kind of the crazy schedule.

ELLA 00:45:08

Great, that was super detailed, where you work, where you go all the different places, so, that was, that was great. Thanks for that answer. So since the pandemic, how I know, we're kind of in this weird transition period now, but how was your work impacted and disrupted by the pandemic?

PAUL 00:45:31

(*pauses*) You know, I first just have to say, I'm very fortunate, I think, you know, we were able to continue full time, tenured faculty, people were able to continue teaching, you know, we switched over to doing it online. And some of it is synchronous, some asynchronous. So, you know, some of like, this morning, I taught a class, before meeting with you today, you know, that was sitting right here. And again, I mean, a lot of people were unable to continue working. And so I know, you know, I don't like just to recognize that I was very fortunate to be able to continue working. But it's been hard, you know, it's, it's not the same. You know, I'm not able to give the students, my students the same experience. And you know, in, in my say, same experience, I mean, in terms of learning activities, right? engagement, I think there's something very different. And I don't think it's obviously something very different between being with somebody in the classroom physically, instead of being on a screen like this, and what we're able the way we're able to communicate with each other in a classroom is so different. And so our students are trying to have, you know, they're trying to make do with what we're able to provide them in the circumstance that we're in. But again, I was fortunate to be able to keep teaching. And so I've been able to do that. It's changed things a lot, because I'm much more. What's the word? sedentary? Is that the right word? (*chuckles*) like,

ELLA 00:47:57

Sedentary?

PAUL 00:47:58

Sedentary? Is that it? I think maybe I was thinking like sediment. (*chuckles*) City. Yeah, that word. Good thing. I'm a math teacher don't need to know those big words. I'm sedentary. Yeah, that's what it is. Now that I say it sounds right. But yeah,

just, you know, just sitting and not getting out and moving around. And so that's been not good for me. Again, I mean, the main thing is what we're not able to provide the students but for me personally, that's something real different. And that had an impact is I didn't sit when I taught. You know, I was always up and moving around. I remember, it's kind of a funny story. One year when I was at Garfield with those ninth graders, I sat down one day, and was probably about April. And those ninth graders were always very observant. And this one kid said, Hey, Mr. Kurose, that's the first time I've seen you sit down all year, right. And then there's one other kids said, Oh, no, there was one other time. It was kind of like, funny because it's already April and this one kid was noticing it and then this other kid had said no, there was this one other time. And so you know, they pick up on everything. But, you know, so for me, this has been so different because I liked being active. I like moving around. I think it was help -helpful for my students for me to move around and, you know, come up and work with them and and more engaging for them. I mean, it's hard to sit and watch them. I hate I've hated taking online classes because they always put me to sleep. (*chuckles*) I kind of feel like, oh, man, this is not what it should be. So that's been hard. And then, in addition to that, you know, I haven't been doing the karate class because we have to shut that down. And I like to play basketball. And I was unable to do that. So I kind of stopped. Recently, I started getting back out and just going to park and shooting around, which has been good for me. But I really did kind of stagnate for quite a while. And, I think it put a lot of us in kind of a stupor in some ways, you know? And so yes, so (*chuckles*), anyway

ELLA 00:50:52

Great. Yeah. Thank you. Thank you so much. I think those are really great observations about the change in like teaching style, and just things that you notice about how that impacts your work. And where you designated as a frontline or a central worker during the governor's order at all?

PAUL 00:51:09

No. And, you know, I probably could have pretended, but you know, we were able to take ourselves and put ourselves online. And so we really didn't have to go out and be on the front line. You know, I'm, I'm 64. So it was like, not that I didn't feel tempted. But, you know, I kept telling people, I'm too young to get the vaccination, because, you know, they have that cut off at 65. And so for the longest time, I just had to wait. And then when they finally opened it up to K 12 educators. I taught with the Upward Bound program during the summer. I've been doing that for the last couple years. So when they finally opened it up to K 12. educators, I felt like, Well, I'm not being dishonest when I say I'm a K 12. educator, because I am teaching those kids during the summer. And then so I got vaccinated. And then, and then I also learned shortly thereafter that since we work with Running Start students who are high school students taking college classes that we qualified to get vaccinated once they open it up for K-12 educators. So now I'm fully vaccinated. Got my second shot about a month ago. So it -it's a relief. Now, just wish everybody else would.

ELLA 00:52:46

Yeah.

ELLA 00:52:48

Great. Did you ever feel that your health was threatened on the job as a result of the pandemic?

PAUL 00:52:59

No, no, because they we really quickly shut things down. I mean, that and again, I'm in a very fortunate position where (*pauses*) we were able to change over quickly to doing things differently. Where we weren't, we're putting ourselves at risk. You know, we stopped having classes right away. I mean, there might have been a week or so or a couple of weeks, maybe when people were kind of figuring things out. But by the time where it seemed like or not, it seemed but when it was really clear what a threat the virus was for teachers, changes were made that protected us. And so I really never was put in that situation.

ELLA 00:54:10

Great. And so this is going through section, as you might have guessed is on health and safety. So some of it might not apply to you because it's on, like personal protective equipment, but some of that definitely well, so feel free to elaborate when it does. So, did your employer provide you any PPE[Personal Protective Equipment]?

PAUL 00:54:28

No.

ELLA 00:54:31

So this, this would probably make a lot of sense though. How does your work responsibilities change with COVID-19?

PAUL 00:54:38

(pauses) there, there was a lot of development on doing things in a different way. And so teaching took a lot of additional preparation for me, because, you know, I had to figure out and come up with materials and methods for trying to provide what I was providing in person. And providing it through these different means, required that I do things differently, and that I have different activities and different lesson plans. And so, really, it has been a lot of revising, developing, planning, and just on how to do things differently, in addition to just trying to figure out how to do things differently, you know, just learning and, you know, I still tell my students, I said, Look, I'm still trying to figure out how to teach, you know, using this mode of instruction, and so you guys have to tell me, now, this, this isn't working the way you're doing it, come up with something, you know, on site, because I am still trying to learn how to do it more effectively. And, you know, I think some of this is still going to, we're still going to be doing some of this in some ways for some time now. So I don't feel like this preparation to do it differently is a waste of time. And even if we weren't going to continue to do it, it's still not a waste of time, because students are taking our classes right now. And so we have to just kind of step up and deliver.

ELLA 00:57:04

Great, could you maybe tell me one, one specific modification or change, you said, it's been, like, you've had to do additional preparation or, like change over how you teach for the online format, what's one thing you've done to try and uh, try and create the best learning experience.

PAUL 00:57:25

I'm grabbing something. [shows camera] So I have this document camera. So, I do a lot of this is my, that's my board. [shows white board] Right? So I'm able to do that. But that's not the same. That's not the same as that whiteboard. That's next to you, right? And so the notes that I used to expect my students to take as I was teaching, it's harder for them to do that with the way I'm presenting the material. So I can't just say, well, it's hard for you need to do that, too bad. I have to say, it's harder for you to do that. So I have to come up with ways to support you doing that. And so, I've provided, you know, and this is, again, a lot of this is based on from feedback, the students have given me like, this would be helpful. And so I've provided them templates for class notes, where I have a lot of the information there already. And so they don't have to get everything that I put here down, they have a lot of that information there. And then they're able to just to feel in detail. And, so that's just one kind of concrete example, I guess. The other that is very challenging, is trying to do things to engage the students. I mean, part of me never sitting down in that classroom was I knew that students weren't going to be engaged if I wasn't right. If I'm, if I'm sitting there at that desk, doing some work, they're sitting at their desk not doing work. And so, you know, classroom, you can do things that keeps students engaged and, and it's not just forcing them to be engaged. I'm not saying to stand over them and say here "Do this!" Right? I'm watching you, but it's being active with them doing things, and you can't be active with them, or I haven't found how to be active with my students in the same way. I'm trying to teach on this thing. In this way, I have All right, I'm constantly probably more accurately trying to encourage them to engage with me. You know, by having the screen on, so shaking their head, like you just did. I said that is so helpful when you're trying to communicate with somebody that you get these sometimes non verbal cues from them that what you just said didn't make any sense. Or sometimes it made sense, right. It's so both things, and, and also, some of those things. Those are things that are challenging, it's trying to do things differently on my part, but also trying to get them to approach it a little bit differently, as well, you know, saying, I can't do some of these things for you, if you don't do approach, these things get much more active in in the lesson with me. And so some of them are really good in being actively involved in the lesson with me giving me those having their cameras on when they can, I mean, some of them, you know, that that's sometimes a cost issue as well. But it does help. And I think it helps them as well as me. And it's, you know, helping them as the more important part of that, but helping me help them by being engaged. So I can see, you know, from their responses, and that, you know, what I'm doing what I said got across to them. And so, yeah, so -so those

are some of the challenges. And things that I'm trying to do differently to address and trying to get my students to do differently to so we can be more successful.

ELLA 01:02:19

Yeah, that's, that sounds great. Were there any staffing changes, uh, in your workplace during this time that changed your workload?

PAUL 01:02:37

There were, again, I'm in a very privileged position, I'm a tenured math instructor. And I've been at it for a while, so I don't need a whole lot of support. And just I guess, in the nature of my position, you know, it's not like being a lab instructor where you have a lab assistant that you need help from. So I haven't encountered any hardships in that manner in that way. personally. I should have mentioned before, I mean, I think the people who- I'm glad you brought that up, the staffing issues have been significant. I mean, there's a lot of And sadly, a lot of people, a lot of people within our organization who have had their positions cut. And many part time instructors lost classes that they were hoping to teach or were scheduled to teach, because of declines in enrollment. And along with those declines of enrollment, I think other staff positions were also eliminated. I think more than staff support for me, so indirectly, stuff work. For me staff support for our students is what got cut back. And, and that's sad that I mean, my opinion is, those at the very top should have been cut proportionately. You know, we have a chancellor and Vice Chancellor where they cut a significant percentage of classes and positions. Well, that was- that percentage of organization that they cut and I think Some of the brunt of the losses should have come at those levels as well.

ELLA 01:05:10

Okay, thank you for sharing that opinion about how basically, changes in staffing occurred in the organization. That makes a lot of sense. And thank you for sharing your opinion on that. Did your -did you receive any- I'm assuming not, but did you receive any hazard pay as a result of the pandemic?

PAUL 01:05:35

yeah, I didn't- wasn't in that kind of position.

ELLA 01:05:37

Yeah. And then so this kind of relates to before, but, were there any actions that were taken by your union or your co-workers to address issues in the workplace that may have occurred during the pandemic?

PAUL 01:05:55

I mean, there's been ongoing things, I think, in the planning. And even right now, in planning the return. There, there has been involvement of union members and just staff in general. So I'm not sure specifically. I have personally, I haven't been engaged in much of that.

ELLA 01:06:37

That's totally fine. Do you? Are there any non unionized workers in your industry teaching? Or is that a requirement of your profession?

PAUL 01:06:49

No, there are people who did not join. I don't know the numbers right now or the percentages right now. Actually, I can't say for certain if I'm aware of any kind of changes in the requirements. the way it used to be is that since the union is representing all instructors, you would still have to pay for that representation, whether you decided to join the union or not. So, you'd have to pay a fee. If you decided not to join the union, you'd have to pay that fee, that representation fee. If you join the union, then you just pay your dues. I think the figures, dollar figures were pretty comparable. So, just on a financial side, it wasn't like you saved a whole bunch of money might not join-joining. Again, I don't know for sure. If there's been changes to that. Yeah so, and, and again, I also don't know what level of non union membership, what that level is.

ELLA 01:08:24

So moving on to you know, the next set of questions, this is just one in this area. I think we have seen, like, three more left that question section. Sorry, this is gonna be a long oral history. So that's, that's great. I'm gonna ask you a little bit about if you received any government assistance, so, uh, yeah, social safety net. Did you access any government or community support uh, during the pandemic?

PAUL 01:08:54

No.

ELLA 01:08:55

No. Okay. And then, yep. So that doesn't apply. Okay, so then just going over

PAUL 01:09:02

Finally, give you a short answer.

ELLA 01:09:04

Yeah. Your experience during the pandemic? Did you ever get sick or know anyone who did during this pandemic?

PAUL 01:09:13

Yes.

ELLA 01:09:14

Mmm, can you tell me your thoughts or feelings on that?

PAUL 01:09:19

(pauses) so, well, I'll start with me, I got this bronchitis for a while. And that kind of freaked me out, because it was just trying to clear my throat. And I couldn't, it was, it was kind of like, you know, it's something I, I'm sure I experienced many times in my life before that when it wasn't a pandemic, but when it was a pandemic, then you start thinking Oh, Man is this that, that thing, right? And so, yeah, that was kind of concerning. I went in and got a few things and seemed to help a little bit. But it kind of persisted, winning, got some other things helped a little bit, but seem to persist and come back. And then eventually, it went away. And then and then the last time I went, I had a chest X ray. And so that so old time, you know, and I and I got tested COVID tested as well, you know, so I did. I mean, I did that very early. So, though, I do teach statistics, and I also teach them in the statistics class about false positives and false negatives. And I think so that doesn't help that I'm teaching that stuff and saying, oh, wonder if I'm one of those and but, yeah, so that was my experience personally with getting sick. My older sister, she's been dealing with Parkinson's and cat's cancer treatments as well. And that's been extra challenging. Yeah, just not being able to be with each other. And so, I'm fortunate that I don't. I'm not real close to anybody who got COVID and suffered extreme in extreme ways, because of it. But yeah,

ELLA 01:12:22

Yeah, thank you for sharing that. That vulnerable information and I'm sorry to hear that illnesses your sister's battling, especially during this time. yeah. Did you ever have to be quarantined for any reason during the pandemic, like explicitly be in a quarantine due to a COVID scare?

PAUL 01:12:46

No. But I sometimes wonder if I overdid it. (chuckles) Myself, overdid like quarantining painting myself. Yeah. Like I've only been in a couple people's houses. for a year. You know, it's like, and yeah, sigh I've been very careful. But no, I'd never had to. Yeah, but, you know, had that. Never was told I needed to, or never did anything where I had to.

ELLA 01:13:39

Okay, great. So this is some more general questions. And it looks like a lot of them are touching on technology meetings. So things that we might have already talked about, like your teaching. So if you feel like something, these questions generate something new, feel free to share it. Or if you feel like they're redundant, then you can be like, Oh, I think we touched on that. And lots of different ones. So have any of your friends, families or neighbors helped you as a result of the pandemic specifically?

PAUL 01:14:22

No, I haven't needed any I mean, so I've been very fortunate.

ELLA 01:14:29

And then, what has been the most challenging part or parts of life during the pandemic for you, uh ? Yeah, open ended question.

PAUL 01:14:38

The most challenging parts are feeling like you can't be with loved ones. Yeah, my mother in law's in Stockton, California. And, She's in an assisted care place there. And we haven't been able to go as much as we'd like, my wife has gone down a couple times, just had to be very careful about certain things. And even when she went down, there were restrictions on the contact she could have with her mom, you know. And so this has all been hard, she couldn't stay in her mom's unit, which we would normally do when we go and visit. Yeah, that's, that's been the hardest thing. The other thing that I might have mentioned is just for me, I was getting, I was doing pretty well on being active and being in shape. I was doing the karate class a couple nights a week. And actually, it started playing basketball about probably it was up to almost four times a week. And then this thing hit and I didn't, I'm not good at just exercising, you know, so the karate and basketball are good ways of me being active sigh kinda. I didn't kinda, (*chuckles*), i stopped. Yeah, I didn't do things that I should have done. So I've been so, so, that those were kind of hard. I've been starting to try and get back out and get a little bit more active. I mean, it's healthy as well, mentally and physically. So,

ELLA 01:16:52

Great. So, within your union membership, have you been participating in any meetings since pandemic?

PAUL 01:17:03

Yeah, I mean, mostly, I mean, I've gone to a few things. Union wide things. I'm there's been some budget conversations. So I show up to a few of those. I've been much more active in this BIPOC caucus. and we, we've met quite a bit. (*pauses*) Yeah, I can't, I can't think anything else.

ELLA 01:17:31

We're all of those meetings moved online.

PAUL 01:17:34

Yes.

ELLA 01:17:35

Okay. And then has access for technology been sufficient for you during this pandemic?

PAUL 01:17:43

Yes, I, Yeah, I did get a new computer. And that made a big difference. Just, I mean, it was the computer I had before, It was just slow. So yeah, I'm for again, fortunate been able to afford a new computer and things have gone well. I also got fortunate and getting this document camera. My Dean said she had one extra and would kind of raffle it off. And she said, Whoever is interested contact me by this particular time. And I can't believe I mean, I was just really lucky, I was the only one who contacted her. And so I got it. And then later on, people started saying, Oh, we wish we would so and then and then they did start making it available for people to go pick up document cameras on campus from some that were in the

classrooms. But no, so I've been lucky to have everything I need. I think, you know, I'm sure there's other things that would be a value.

ELLA 01:18:55

Great. Has your housing situation ever been threatened by the pandemic?

PAUL 01:19:03

No.

ELLA 01:19:04

And then can you describe if you've had any economic impacts in your life, because of the pandemic?

PAUL 01:19:13

No, I think me and my wife were both able to continue working. And so we're very fortunate that way.

ELLA 01:19:19

Okay, how is the pandemic changed your social life? And have there been any online social gatherings that you've taken part of in the past year as part of that?

PAUL 01:19:33

Yeah, it's it. It's definitely, in fact, good. I mean, you know, it's, like hanging out with friends. It's something I don't do. We've tried to do a few of those, but we haven't been, you know, it's not the same. But I think everybody you know, we check in with each other At times, and just kind of seeing everybody's doing okay, and everybody's just trying to take care of ourselves and our families. And so I think that's been more the focus. Yeah, glad I have a dog. (*chuckles*) Yeah.

ELLA 01:20:23

Awesome. And has the pandemic changed any of your access to food or, specifically culturally significant foods that may be part of your diet?

PAUL 01:20:40

No, I mean, early on, like I said, I really tried to keep as far away from anybody as possible. So I mean, I was doing like, the grocery delivery thing. You know, I wasn't going out to stores as saying I'll order it, telling them to put it out in my parking strip, you know? No, but you know, I've been pretty able to get what I wanted.

ELLA 01:21:19

Okay, great. You talked about this a little bit before. This question is about how the pandemic has impacted your sense of personal well being. I know, you've touched a lot on physical activity. Is there anything else to add to that?

PAUL 01:21:42

(*pauses*) I think probably so. But it's kind of like one of those things where you just carry on, like, I do know, I went out. It's probably about a month ago. This place right up the street where I go shoot baskets, I, this friend of mine lives just around the corner from there. And I texted him and told him, Hey, I'm out here. And he came out. And we were talking, and he was saying, and I was saying how I was really just trying to get back out and start getting physically active and stuff. And he said, Well, you've been suffering from depression. And I said, No, I haven't been suffering depression, I've just been not doing anything. He said, he said, "Well, that's kind of depression." And then that kind of made some sense. So it's like, I don't really think of it that way. But maybe some of my responses have been mental health kind of concerns, like not being active, not connecting with people as much, you know, I mean, I, again, I mean, I think it's, I'm glad I have this thing, able to do like this, the different people at different times, but that that has, that's hard. You know, and I'm sure we're all affected by it in different ways. But, you know, until somebody points it out to you, maybe you don't realize, oh, maybe I am kind of suffering from this in a different way. You know, but, I mean, that was that kind of was good. I think about him saying that to me, and I, maybe I need to just try and get out and do more. So if nothing else, it kind of pushed

me to say I can't stay in this funk so much, and gotta get out and keep trying to be more active. So, trying to pull - pull back out of that and back into doing things that are good for me.

ELLA 01:24:06

Great, thank you for sharing that anecdote and bringing in the aspect of mental health in your, your own life during this through this time. During the pandemic, I know we're kind of emerging now that people are getting vaccinated, but, within your family and social services, what safety strategies Did you have that can include mass varying social distancing, you know, what did your social circle and family practice have anything?

PAUL 01:24:40

You know, well, especially with my older sister who you know, is suffering, those other health issues. I mean, we really stayed away. I mean, I mean, I'd go and visit her, but I would be out in the yard, talking. I came to her from a distance. And so, you know, I wouldn't go into her house. And we've been pretty much that way, you know. Yeah, so I think I probably -not probably I know that I've been one who's been more extreme about social distancing is social isolation, maybe. In terms of just physical presence, right, just, masking up has always been, you know, very careful about and keeping distance in that going indoors. You know?

ELLA 01:25:58

Yeah, great. Yeah, it sounds like you really had to practice pretty intense social distancing with such a sick loved one. And, you know, thank you for including that about that door indoor distinction . Yeah, thank you. So, can you walk me through uh, you walk me through a lot of aspects of your life during the pandemic, but can you give me like a a just summary of a typical day during the pandemic, kind of like we did before, from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed, what your day involves.

PAUL 01:26:33

Okay, getting up, and everything's in the house now get, you know, doing everything and then so you don't have to leave. And don't have to go out and get coffee, you have that here, don't have to commute. (*pauses*) So a lot of the office type of work, you know, saw sit down in different places in the house, or if it's nice enough out the back porch, back deck, then doing some classes, online classes at times, but then a lot of there's a synchronous class lessons sessions, and then the asynchronous stuff, where I'm just doing a lot of work developing and putting materials out for the students. And then sometimes, I would find myself not even ever getting out of the house. And so, like, at times, I'll just, even now, like, last night, I ran to the grocery store at 10 o'clock last night. And then that was I went over to u village. And then there's this Starbucks drive thru, that's open 24 hours out near North Seattle College. And so I just drove out there just to get a big cup of tea. And, but it was like, (*chuckles*) seems kind of crazy to drive that far. But it's kind of like just getting out is needed to do. Anyway, so yeah, I got to try and do more. So a lot of lot of the routine during the pandemic didn't involve getting out, you know, it was you know, you're doing everything here, you're not going out to eat and so sometimes you have to force yourself to leave the house to do something. You know, and and so, the good thing is now, you know, like yesterday I had was (*chuckles*) gonna good thing, doesn't matter what you look like or what you're wearing or so, yesterday at two o'clock, I went out and shot around for a while, shot baskets for a while. And then I came back and I had meetings from four to six, but I was able to do that and just come back and sit on the other side of the screen. still kind of sweaty, but Oh, well (*chuckles*) So I mean, yeah. So trying to do more of that now.

ELLA 01:29:55

Thanks. That's a Yeah, that's a great example of kind of more general I'll walk through and then some specifics and I definitely agree like everything so connects now with where you live in your spaces. I know you have kids, but are any of them still school age or childcare age? Are they all out of the house or grown up?

PAUL 01:30:16

No, we just so we just have one son, and he's a senior in college. He's at San Luis Obispo, Cal Poly, and you'll be graduating soon. Yeah, so it's and he was home for a lot of spring quarter and last summer. But he had already had a lease signed for this school year. And even though his classes are online, he's a senior in college, he didn't want to be home. You

know, and he had a place so he went back. So that's been that's been good. We're glad that he was able to do that. But we don't have any the other who have the childcare and then the K-12 education stuff is such they're not getting what they, I mean, such a loss on what they've been able to get. Yeah.

ELLA 01:31:26

Okay. Thank you for clarifying all that. So I think we just have two more sections. And there's going to be a section of questions around the Black Lives Matter movement, and how that's evolved over the last year. And then some reflective questions at the end. So I'm looking back at the spring of, I guess, would be a year ago. 2020. What were your observations and thoughts regarding the movement and the protests during that time?

PAUL 01:31:54

I was sad that I couldn't be out there. I mean, I felt like, no, it's, it's terrible. It's continuing to take place. Actually went to a session yesterday. It was at a university of California, Santa Barbara, where they had, this guy, Mike Africa, Jr, who was whose family was part of move in Philadelphia, who the police bombed their home and killed a bunch of the members, and then they put his parents in prison. But that was just an example of, you know, how this has been going on for so long. And so when stuff broke out last spring with George Floyd's that being exposed, what happened to him, yeah, it's, (pauses) for me, personally, I wish I could have been more involved and could have felt comfortable being more supportive, actively supportive. But I tried to do things within, you know, the confines that I'm find myself in. So we did some things tried to address some of those issues. In our campus positions. Yeah. So that's

ELLA 01:33:41

Great. yeah, I think some of the questions on this actually asked about how your union might have been involved in impacted so we can talk about that. It's actually the next question. So how was your union either involved or impacted during that time? And I guess we'll start with that.

PAUL 01:34:08

The Union, the College District. Some so many people put out statements, you know, everybody put up Black Lives Matter sign, and I think that's kind of where our BIPOC caucus really came to be out of hearing all that talk. But the contradictions within like, Black Lives Matter, but, you know, you're we (pauses) still have the same lack of representation. You know, lack of being clusion that has just historically been, resulted in us having so much inequity within our education system. And, you know, all the talk about commitment to equity and Black Lives mattering was contradictory to business as usual. And so that's some of the stuff that we've been trying to confront.

ELLA 01:35:43

Great. Can I ask a little bit about when your union did kind of step in and say, Okay, we're seeing all this talk, we're trying to work from within, did you create, honestly, almost like a list of demands? Like, what were some of the specific steps that your caucus is demanding you're taking to change these things within the education system in your union.

PAUL 01:36:12

So within our union, our caucus, we sent a message to the union leadership, around the lack of representation in the leadership, and we didn't get a response back for quite a while. And when we finally did get a response back, it was, we want you to know that we took your concern seriously and over the last few months, we've been thinking about it. And we went and hired an anti racist trainer to work with us. And we've been working on a proposal to present to you to see what you think. And it was like, you know, so And on top of that, the anti racist trainer they brought in to train them to be anti racist, was white. And so it's like, you have your and they and, and I, we said, some send something back saying, Well, you know, the first thing that's anti racist trainer should have told you is that you shouldn't be independently trying to come up with your plan, and maybe the just, you know, just right from jump, just saying, look, okay, we gotta stop just working in exclusion of all of you, and start immediately being inclusive of all of you. And so, you know, what we saw we put out there is that people need to make a commitment to changing representation in leadership. And so that was kind of that meeting I was at yesterday with that caucus was and addressing that, and continuing to, there's actually a meeting tomorrow on trying to get put a slate together. And also a proposal for a different structure in different ways that

leadership within the union operates, where it's not like, okay, now your leadership and you're acting like administration, as opposed to leadership of this, the rank and file, right, you should be meeting with us every once in a while, not just meeting with administration on our behalf. And so yeah, we had there are some really wise and knowledgeable people within our caucus around a lot of labor issues and so really appreciate what some of them their activism, in bring these changes about. So it's been nice, at least, you know, we're, it feels good to be a part of something like that, and that that's taking place.

ELLA 01:39:52

Great, great elaborate elaboration and insight that you have into that. Thank you so much for sharing Hearing about those inner workings. It's fascinating and really important. This is very similar so you can elaborate more or if you feel like you cover it, that's fine. And do you have any parallels you can draw between the Black Lives Matter movement and issues of race in the workplace today. So there's anything else you want to touch on? That's great. If not, that's also great.

PAUL 01:40:24

Oh, there's -there's so much. I mean, actually, last spring, within that North Seattle College, there was a African American student was suspended. This is after the government, Governor and Mayor stay at home orders, the head of the security at North Seattle College, ordered this student to come out and meet with him. So ordered him to come to campus. This is after the stay at home order. And had them come out to campus to tell him that he was ordered not to come onto campus anymore. And in addition, had been suspended from the class that he was registered in, and have had addresses creation for that class revoked. This young man actually was somebody my older brother, who was a karate teacher had worked with my older brother worked with a lot of at risk youth in Seattle, and when this student at North Seattle was a young kid, he is one that my older brother had worked with. So I had some connection to him. And so I raised, concern about what happened, them suspending this kid, this student, that kid anymore as a student, from this class, and the interim president, at that time, who's the Vice Chancellor of our district refused to even acknowledge that it was wrong to order him to come to campus during the pandemic. And it was wrong to suspend him from this last class that he needed to complete his AA degree. So he's at the tail end. And so I continued to send messages. Finally, I reached out to Sharon Tomiko Santos, state representative, who raise the issue with the chancellor for the district. And we were able to get that student reinstated into the college. And as it turned out, the student was suspended, without him ever being given the due process rights that he was supposed to have as a student before being suspended. And the Vice Chancellor for the district has never been held accountable for doing that. The head of security who required the student to come out to campus actually made a mistake in a zoom meeting a little bit later, and then have his mute on when he thought he did. And he said some things that expose who he was that we had tried to tell the administration that he was, and so he's no longer there. But they never apologize to the student for so anyway so, so it happens. And you know, this is what I'm saying about the chancellor for the district Vice Chancellor, they put up those signs, Black Lives Matter. But then right here within the district, they were going to pull something like that on this student. And the only way we were able to get it revoked was bringing in people from outside who had some political, little bit of political clout. So yeah, those things happen. You know, they continue to happen in our K 12 system. African American males in particularly getting suspended way, disproportionately much higher, disproportionately higher rates disproportionately in consequences that have nothing to do, or actually are counter to the claim of being committed to seeing these students get educated. If you're committed to these students getting educated, you don't kick them out. And that's what we continually see with African American males.

ELLA 01:45:38

Yeah, thank you for articulating all of that so well, and just elaborating how the Black Lives Matter movement really exists in every facet of life. And it's not just about police, it's about the whole system and your personal examples, seeing that in your own workplace, and what you've done to be a part of remedying that. So, thank you so much. I have one final question on this area. And if you see any connections, between the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement, or how they, you know, interacted with each other, coming about really swelling at the same time.

PAUL 01:46:28

(Pauses) I mean, I think, you know, we've seen (pauses) the, well, it's always the well being of certain communities or put over others. And, you know, and black communities in our country are, the well being of the black community is never

given the priority, it should be given. And that has been the case with the response to the pandemic. And I think all of that contributes to a lot of the strife we see within those communities, between our communities, you know, the anti Asian violence, where some people are seeing and pointing out that some of that is coming from other communities of color. And kind of not seeing that in that historical perspective that, you know, victims of racism, often, you know, you're thrown in to fight over scraps, or, you know, you're put in these situations, and that's where a lot of the tension explodes, you know so, anyway, the response to pandemic hasn't had the well being of all communities equally considered.

ELLA 01:48:38

Super, super well put. Yeah, thank you for tying all of that together and sharing your perspective on that. These are the final little set of questions. They're like reflective questions about this period of time. I know that last set was like very intense. So these are more philosophical at the end. So how do you think that, you know, these are speculative? How do you think life will be different after this incredibly tumultuous year?

PAUL 01:49:11

Well, on top of all of this, we have our political situation. So that's, *(pauses)*, it's hard to put things in a relative, you know, relative weight way things relative to each other. But I mean, I think that's, in some ways, a greater threat. What's happening with our democracy, what's happening with, human rights rights of people of color, you know where the yeah, that's, that's, it's, there's so much. And so and then the pandemic, on top of that I know, there's, you know, and the sad thing is how that gets intertwined where not getting vaccinated becomes a political, like stubborn, you know, that like, a statement, right. And it's like, you want to make this statement, as opposed to looking out for the well being of society in humanity. And it's so that's being at that point is, yeah, it's all intertwined. You know, it's very concerning. And I hope that we do things to make. So we come out of this, better, better off somehow. I mean, it's not, it's not nearly, the level of concern about it isn't any place near what it needs to be? I mean, I mean, we're so close to just losing our democracy. And, you know, these votes are taking place that are disenfranchising communities of color around the nation, and it's not being stopped. You know, we got stuck, you get something to be done. And I, and I do hope, you know, we got to find a way of not having them win by doing this. Anyway, that's a lot.

ELLA 01:52:21

Oh, that's, that's great. Thank you for just bringing up, you know, what you're seeing of your own volition bringing up issues about the democracy that aren't even actually touched upon in these questions. And has anything surprised you about this period of time thinking about the past year?

ELLA 01:52:46

We're near the end. *(chuckles)*

PAUL 01:52:52

You know what I'm going to, I'm I'm going to tell somebody, I'm going to be late to the meeting. Okay.

ELLA 01:52:57

Yeah. You have- You have, I think, like one and a half questions left. So

PAUL 01:53:02

yeah,

ELLA 01:53:03

If you need to run, that's okay.

PAUL 01:53:19

(pauses) I'm sorry. Can you ask me that question again?

ELLA 01:53:21

Yeah, I'll just ask you. Just for the sake of your time, I'll ask you the two last questions together. And if there's anything that surprised you, during the pandemic, and this past year in general, and then if there have been any positive experiences that have come about through this pandemic, in your life?

PAUL 01:53:46

(sighs) (pauses) I don't know if I shouldn't be surprised at how I mean, what I was just talking about how extreme our country has gone in this other direction, to. Just the dishonesty and just lying about, whatever, you know, denial and I think the surprising I guess the thing that's surprising is how supported that is where you could have that former president talking about that insurrection, being a bunch of people running in and hugging the police and having people not condemned that, you know, and beyond not condemning it, but embracing that--and the level at which you see that happening. Being just as incredibly high as it is. So, that's surprising part of it. I mean, the good thing is, you know, kind of like with any tough situation in people pulling together and supporting each other, taking the stands that people have taken, the courage that you've seen some exhibit, and how positive you see some of them being I mean that that thing again, I went to that event yesterday with Mike Africa, Jr, from who was born in prison, because his mom was unjustly incarcerated. And, I mean, to see him how positive he is and how full of love and hope he was. So, saying things like that, through these times, I think that's the positive thing is sometimes through these kinds of situations, you see, things that you might just take for granted or not appreciate until you see people step up like they have and then makes you really appreciate that side of humanity.

ELLA 01:56:50

Great. Well, that's all the questions I have. The only other thing is you know, is there anything you want to share that we've missed? But I think we covered a lot, is there anything else?

PAUL 01:57:06

Sorry for talking your ear off (*chuckles*)

ELLA 01:57:08

No, like if there is anything else, please share.

PAUL 01:57:12

No, no, I think (pauses) yeah. Hope for better days.

ELLA 01:57:23

Okay.

PAUL 01:57:25

Yeah, I can't think anything else but thank you for doing what you're doing. Thank you for including me.

ELLA 01:57:31

I'm gonna pause the recording